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**Legislation responds to unfair market power of giant agri-business:**

## **DORGAN INTRODUCES LEGISLATION TO STOP ANTI-COMPETITIVE PRACTICES AND MEGA-MERGERS IN AGRICULTURE**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) — U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND), Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD), and 11 other farm state senators introduced legislation Wednesday to fight anti-competitive practices by giant corporations in agriculture that press farmers, ranchers and rural economies already under financial strain because of collapsed farm prices.

“Farmers have a right to expect a chance to make a decent living,” Dorgan said. “That’s hard enough when times are tough, but to allow competition to be driven from the market place by big corporations that systematically work to concentrate the market is simply unacceptable. We need to act now to ensure that market competition -- and family farms and ranches -- survive in America.”

The legislation, known as the “Farmers and Ranchers Fair Competition Act,” would:

- , establish a Special Counsel on Fair Markets and Rural Opportunity at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), who would lead stepped-up enforcement efforts to ensure market competition;
- , authorize the General Accounting Office (GAO) to study anti-competitive practices in the agriculture sector;
- , require USDA to evaluate the impact of proposed mega-mergers on farm producers and rural communities;
- , require agriculture related corporations that do \$100 million or more in business annually to disclose ownership of other ag related businesses, interlocking boards of directors and lobbyists in a report filed with the Secretary of Agriculture;
- , prohibit unfair practices in transactions involving agricultural commodities. Among the practices it would prohibit: discriminatory or deceptive practices; unreasonable preference; false or misleading statements; retaliation related to statements lawfully provided (whistle-blower protection); “right of first refusal” requirements by packers; and unreasonable price discrimination;
- , establish a “Family Farmer and Rancher Claims Commission” authorized to provide compensation for injury from the above actions;
- , establish plain language and disclosure requirements for production and marketing contracts.

Dorgan is chairman of the Democratic Policy Committee, which has held a series of hearings this year to explore the consequences of the current failed federal farm policy and just last week conducted a hearing on the lack of competition in agriculture markets.

Other co-sponsors of the bill include Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA), Kent Conrad (D-ND), Tim Johnson (D-SD), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Russ Feingold (D-WI), Herb Kohl (D-WI), Bob Kerrey (D-NE) Max Baucus (D-MT), Paul Wellstone (D-MN), Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), and Carl Levin (D-MI).